

# STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING BEHAVIORAL SELF CONTROL

## EXAMPLES OF MICRO-CHANGES IN ROUTINES AND PRACTICES

- Identify when the behavior trouble spots occur in the classroom, and create a classroom routine for students to use instead. Give the routine a name. Describe it; model it; have students practice the routine several times in a row on the first day; and practice it once or twice for the rest of the week. Then use it as part of the regular classroom routines and reteach occasionally as needed.
- Reframe the classroom rules so that there are fewer rules, described in words that the students can understand, and phrased positively so that they are a list of “Things To Do” and not a list of “Things Not to Do.”
- Put 25 tokens in your pocket at the beginning of the day, and hand one to students when you catch them following the “Things To Do” rules. As one variation, have a ‘tootling time’ when students can nominate a classmate for a token because of something good that the classmate did.
- Teach students to use calming strategies when angry or upset: “touch your heart” (how are you feeling); “take a deep breath, count to 5 slowly”; “put your hand on your heart and think or say ‘slow down’;” “Breathe in – breathe out.”
- Create some steps that students can follow if they are angry: First, move to a “safe place” where students can go but not be in trouble. Students can still do their work in that place. If this doesn’t help, quietly draw the situation that is a problem. Decide what to do, and write that down. Then, return to the class.
- Teach students to stop and think about problems before reacting using “Stop and think” or “Before you react get the Facts!” steps.
- Teach students self-control by showing them how to keep a simple record of their own behavior and to enter their data onto a simple graph. Students can connect each data ‘dot’ with a line, and decide whether their graph is going up (behavior improving), staying the same, or going down. Then, they can write a contract describing what they will do to make their line go up.

## EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) is a universal competence-building intervention that has been shown to improve students’ self-regulation and problem-solving skills (Kam, Greenberg, & Kusche, 2004; Kusche & Greenberg, 1994). The program’s twenty-minute lessons are taught three times a week in the general education or special education classroom.
- I Can Problem Solve (Shure, 1997). This is a year-long curricula that teaches students to think about the social problems that they encounter, consider alternative solutions, carefully consider the feelings of other students and themselves, and translate these into competent social behaviors. Evidence shows that the program strengthens children’s prosocial behaviors and decreases their social impulsivity.
- Coping Power (Lochman, Powell, Boxmeyer, & Baden, 2010). While the principal component of this program is a therapeutic intervention for highly aggressive children, there is also a classwide Coping Power curriculum that teaches students to use goal setting, problem solving, and anger management skills. The classwide curriculum has shown small improvements in all students’ behavior and social competence, but it has shown larger effects in improving the behavioral competence of highly aggressive children whose classroom has been trained in Coping Power skills.

